

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2567

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USMISSION NATO

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

S E C R E T LISBON 2299

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PDEV, PO

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH ADMIRAL ALVA ROSA COUTINHO

1. HAD PRIVATE CONVERSATION TODAY WITH ADMIRAL ALVA ROSA COUTINHO IN HIS HEADQUARTERS IN NEWLY CONSTRUCTED, GOVERNMENT-CONFISCATED BUILDING FORMERLY OWNED BY GRAO-PARA COMPANY WHOSE DIRECTORS HAVE FLED COUNTRY. BUILDING INCLUDES COMMITTEE FOR EXTINCTION OF PIDE-GDS, AFM DYNAMIZATION CAMPAIGN, AND EXECUTIVE SECRETARIAT OF REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. IT IS REplete WITH AFM POSTERS AND GUARDED BY ARMED MILITARY. AS USUAL, ROSA COUTINHO WAS CONFIDENT, FRIENDLY AND INFORMAL.

2. ROSA COUTINHO ASKED ME ABOUT INTERNATIONAL REACTION TO "PROGRAM OF UNDERSTANDING" BETWEEN AFM AND POLITICAL PARTIES. AS DEPARTMENT AWARE THIS PROGRAM WAS ESSENTIALLY DEVELOPED AND "NEGOTIATED" BY ROSA COUTINHO.

3. I RESPONDED THAT IMPRESSION WAS ONE OF REASSERTION OF MILITARY AUTHORITY. POLITICAL SPECTRUM HAD CLEARLY BEEN

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RESTRICTED. GENERAL INTERPRETATION WAS THAT MILITARY WOULD

CONTINUE TO DOMINATE PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SCENE FOR LONGER PERIOD THAN ANTICIPATED.

4. DESPITE THIS AND DESPITE FACT THAT OUTLINES OF CONSTITUTION HAD ALREADY BEEN WRITTEN, I STILL CONSIDERED ELECTIONS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT. THE EVENT ITSELF WOULD BE WIDELY AND FAVORABLY REPORTED IN WORLD PRESS, ASSUMING PRESENT ATMOSPHERE OF RELATIVE CALM CONTINUES TO PREVAIL. MOREOVER, THE ELECTIONS WOULD NECESSARILY INFLUENCE THE POLICIES OF THE AFM. ROSA COUTINHO NODDED HIS ASSENT TO LATTER POINT.

5. LOOKING BEYOND ELECTIONS I ADDED THAT IT WAS VERY IMPORTANT (A) THAT RESULTS BE FULLY RESPECTED AND (B) THERE BE SOME DEMONSTRATION OF GOP'S INTENT TO CONTINUE THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS. ONE POSSIBILITY WOULD BE TO MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT ON FUTURE ELECTIONS, EITHER FOR THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OR FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL BODIES.

6. ROSA COUTINHO ACCEPTED THIS. SAID THERE NO QUESTION ABOUT RESPECTING THE RESULTS. "THOSE WHO ARE ELECTED WILL SIT IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY." ELECTIONS ARE ONLY A FIRST STEP IN THE TOTAL PROCESS, HE NOTED. FURTHER ELECTIONS WOULD TAKE PLACE, BUT GOP HAD TO CONSIDER APPROPRIATE TIME FRAME. CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY WAS SCHEDULED TO COMPLETE ITS DELIBERATIONS IN 90 DAYS. KNOWING PORTUGAL, ROSA COUTINHO COMMENTED, THIS PERIOD WOULD NOT BE MET. HE FORESAW A 90 DAY EXTENSION. THIS MEANT ELECTIONS FOR LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY COULD NOT BE HELD BEFORE END OF 1975.

7. COUTINHO AGREED ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL ENTITIES WERE DESIRABLE AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE. THE PROBLEM WAS HOW TO HOLD ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL STRUCTURES BEFORE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HAD DECIDED WHAT THOSE STRUCTURES SHOULD BE. PARTICULARLY DIFFICULT WOULD BE THE ELECTION OF LOCAL CIVIL GOVERNORS SINCE PORTUGAL HAS NO TRADITION OF ELECTED GOVERNORS. HE SAID "WE WILL HAVE TO DETERMINE IF WE CAN HOLD LOCAL ELECTIONS BEFORE THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HAS COMPLETED ITS WORK OR WHETHER IT WOULD BE BETTER TO HOLD THEM IMMEDIATELY THEREAFTER.

8. WE THEN DISCUSSED THE NEED FOR THE AFM TO HAVE A BROADER  
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POLITICAL BASE. I POINTED OUT THAT RIGHT NOW THE AFM SEEMED TO BE BASING ITS SUPPORT PRINCIPALLY IN ONE PARTY (THE PCP) AND THAT THIS WAS FUNDAMENTALLY UNHEALTHY.

9. ROSA COUTINHO LAMENTED THAT HIS STATEMENT ON THE FORMATION OF A NEW POLITICAL PARTY HAD BEEN MISUNDERSTOOD. HIS INTENTION HAD BEEN TO BROADEN THE BASE OF THE AFM NOT TO CREATE A ONE PARTY STATE. IT IS TRUE THAT PORTUGAL NOW HAS TOO MANY

PARTIES, MANY OF WHICH ARE SCUTTling THEMSELVES IN THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. IT IS LIKELY THAT SOME WOULD BE ABOLISHED AFTER THE ELECTIONS. OTHER PARTIES WOULD MERGE. HE THOUGHT THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER OF PARTIES MIGHT BE AROUND 5. TWO WAS TOO SMALL AND THE PRESENT 15 FAR TOO MANY.

10. BUT THE MAIN ISSUE WAS NOT THE NUMBER OF PARTIES BUT DEVELOPING A CIVILIAN BASE FOR THE GOALS OF THE REVOLUTION. HOW CAN THE AFM TRANSFER POWER TO CIVILIANS, HE ASKED, UNLESS SUCH A BASE EXISTS? RIGHT NOW THERE IS NO PARTY ON WHOM THE AFM CAN DEPEND. (THIS POINT WAS INTERESTING IN LIGHT OF MY POINTED REFERENCE TO PCP.) HE STRESSED THAT SUCH A PARTY WOULD HAVE TO BE A GENUINE CIVILIAN ORGANIZATION, NOT A CREATURE OF THE AFM.

11. COMMENT: ROSA COUTINHO IS THE MOST POLITICALLY SOPHISTICATED OF THE AFM LEADERS I HAVE MET. IT IS STILL UNCLEAR WHERE HE FITS INTO THE POWER STRUCTURE, BUT HE IS A MAN WHO IS SPEAKING OUT INCREASINGLY AND WITH A GOOD DEAL OF SELF-ASSURANCE. HE SEEMS TO BE UNEASY WITH THE HEAVY DEPENDENCE OF THE AFM ON THE PCP (HE MAY BE EQUALLY UNEASY ABOUT POSSIBLE MODERATE RIGHT VICTORY IN ELECTIONS), AND IS VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE DANGER OF THE AFM WITHDRAWING EVEN MORE INTO ITSELF IF IT FAILS TO BUILD A POLITICAL BASE. IF HE SUCCEEDS IN ADDING A POLITICAL PORTFOLIO TO HIS ALREADY IMPRESSIVE CREDENTIALS (AND THESE COULD BE BROADENED ANY DAY TO INCLUDE DIRECTOR OF INTELLIGENCE AND CHIEF OF STAFF OF THE ARMED FORCES), HE COULD BECOME THE SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL IN PORTUGAL. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE IF VASCO GONCALVES WILL STAND BY WHILE THIS HAPPENS.  
CARLUCCI

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